

MINUTES
New Hampshire State Commission on Aging
Monday, February 13, 2023 10:00 a.m.-Noon
NH Employment Security, 45 South Fruit St., Concord, NH

Present in person: Susan Ruka, Chair; Carol Stamatakis, Vice Chair; Roberta Berner, Clerk; Rep. James MacKay; Sunny Mulligan Shea, DOJ; Susan Buxton, Long-Term Care Ombudsman; Wendi Aultman, DHHS; Richard Lavers, NHES; Tracy McGraw, DOL; Shelley Winters, DOT; Appointed by the Governor: Polly Campion, Suzanne Demers, Doug McNutt, Daniel Marcek, Kristi St. Laurent, Roxie Severance, Susan Denopoulos

Rebecca Sky, Executive Director; Chris Dugan, Communications and Engagement Director

Present via teleconference Lynn Lippitt, NH Housing Finance Authority; Beth Quarm Todgham, Rep. Lucy McVitty Weber, Rev. Susan Nolan

Absent: Rep. Charles McMahon; Ray Fernandez, DOS; Sen. Bill Gannon; Harry Viens, Laurie Duff

Presenters: Christina FitzPatrick, AARP-NH; Heather Carroll, NH Alliance for Healthy Aging; Jessica Eskeland, Alzheimer's Association; Brendan Williams, NH Health Care Association; Gina Balkus, Home Care, Hospice & Palliative Care Alliance of NH

Guests: Martha McLeod, Carissa Elphick, Jennifer Rabalais, Christian Seasholtz, Marcia Garber, Richard Danford, Kris Hering, Sandy Ruka, Ashlee Chaine, Helen Cornman, Cheryl O'Malley, Kim Murphy, Kristin Kostecki, F. Vignand

I. Welcome, Attendance, Review of Minutes

Chair Sue Ruka provided an overview of the agenda and welcomed the Commission members and guests to the meeting. Today's meeting was held concurrently in person at NH Employment Security and via teleconference. A quorum was present in person.

Chair Susan Ruka made a motion to approve the minutes of the January Commission meeting; Dan Marcek seconded the motion; the motion was approved unanimously.

Meals on Wheels NH provided the Commission a written update regarding services provided in 2022, their impact, and projections for increases in services and costs. Dan Marcek made a motion to accept the document as an addition to the minutes (end of document); Doug McNutt seconded the motion; the motion was approved unanimously.

II. State House Policy Agendas with presentations from AARP, the Alliance for Healthy Aging, the Alzheimer's Association, Health Care Association, and Home Care, Hospice & Palliative Care Alliance of NH.

Chair Ruka welcomed and introduced the panel of presenters. The presenters first spoke about top priority issues and bills for their organizations. Following a break for questions, the presenters addressed additional issues of concern.

A. Christina FitzPatrick, State Director, AARP-NH (*Handouts: AARP New Hampshire Legislative Priorities 2023, AARP Policy Fundamentals*)

Ms. FitzPatrick identified AARP's top priorities as prescription drug affordability coupled with transparency in prescription drug pricing. In New Hampshire, AARP is opposed to HB130 and HB172 which address potential redundancies between the Prescription Drug Affordability Board (PDAB) and existing state agency programs. AARP does not believe there is redundancy and supports the

PDAB to continue to bring transparency to rising drug costs and recommend ways to save the state money.

B. Heather Carroll, Advocacy Director, NH Alliance for Healthy Aging (AHA)

AHA has identified SB36, relative to the systems of care for healthy aging, as its top legislative priority. Ms. Carroll said that AHA considers it imperative that New Hampshire's older adults have a choice to age in the manner they would like in their communities. She outlined key aspects of the bill:

- Expediting Choices for Independence (CFI, Medicaid home and community-based care);
- Ensuring adequate rates for homecare;
- Strengthening the ServiceLink Aging and Disability network;
- Improving oversight capacity in regard to home-based care.

AHA has been engaged first with the Senate Health and Human Services Committee and will then be working with the Senate Fiscal Committee, since the bill involves fiscal considerations. Ms. Carroll said, "We have to invest to see change happen."

C. Jessica Eskeland, Senior Public Policy Manager, Alzheimer's Association (*Handout: 2023 New Hampshire Legislative Priority*)

The Alzheimer's Association's top priority is supporting SB234, which directs the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to develop a public awareness campaign on brain health and on Alzheimer's disease and related dementias. The bill focuses on educating health care providers about the importance of early detection and timely diagnosis of cognitive impairment, increasing public understanding and awareness of early warning signs of Alzheimer's disease and related dementias, and informing health care professionals and the public of dementia care coordination services and other resources.

D. Brendan Williams, President & CEO, NH Health Care Association

The NH Health Care Association's top focus is on workforce-related issues. Mr. Williams said that SB86 provides a template for addressing workforce needs in the long-term care arena. He said that on a per capita basis, New Hampshire has the second highest workforce shortage in long-term care among all the states. Nursing facility members of the Health Care Association are offering signing bonuses to LNAs, establishing waitlists for care, taking beds "off-line," and more. Their inability to accept a full complement of residents puts a strain on hospitals, which must keep patients until there is a place that can accept them upon discharge. Mr. Williams said that the health care and long-term care sectors are seeking ways to address the workforce crisis in partnership.

He said that the Association supports SB149 which proposes requiring staffing agencies to be more transparent regarding pricing and best practices. The Association opposes HB496 which proposes requiring a resident of a long-term care facility to fill out an absentee ballot under the supervision of two individuals representing the two major political parties. Mr. Williams said that the facility is the resident's home and this supervision should not happen, especially with voter fraud a non-issue in this type situation.

E. Gina Balkus, Executive Director, Home Care, Hospice & Palliative Care Alliance of NH

Workforce issues are also top priority for the Alliance, which supports SB86, proposing to direct DHHS to increase Medicaid provider rates, to establish a community health worker certification program in the Office of Professional Licensure and Certification, and to direct DHHS to issue a request for proposals to expand access to health services in rural and underserved areas of the

state. Ms. Balkus said it was particularly important to fund the services in full. At this point, clients are on average receiving only 66 percent of their authorized services (e.g., 49 percent of authorized homemaker services and 69 percent of authorized skilled nursing visits). She said, for example, “If you are a CFI client and need assistance with showering, you might just get that help once a week.”

The Alliance also supports SB36 in light of how difficult it is to get someone into the CFI program. Ms. Balkus said this is a particularly hard process for someone on hospice and that families end up struggling to help their loved ones who are dying at home.

After a break for questions, the presenters addressed additional issues of interest and concern.

- A. Christina FitzPatrick** said that AARP-NH strongly supports several of the bills that her colleagues addressed as their organizations’ top priorities. She noted other issues of concern:
- A proposed constitutional amendment (CACR6) to raise judges’ mandatory retirement age from 70 to 75. AARP-NH would like to see employment decisions based on ability, not on age.
 - AARP-NH supports SB220 relative to absentee voting without facing unnecessary roadblocks.
 - The organization supports the extension of the New Hampshire Granite Advantage Health Care Program (Medicaid Expansion), SB263.
 - AARP-NH also supports ensuring access to high speed internet—both expansion of the physical infrastructure to reach underserved areas and increased affordability and education in how to use the internet for purposes including telehealth and prevention of social isolation.
- B. Heather Carroll** said that AHA strongly supports HB86, the workforce bill earlier discussed by Brendan Williams. She said that New Hampshire’s workforce shortage in long-term care is “beyond a crisis,” and noted that SB36, the systems of care bill, could not work as intended if the workforce is inadequate. She also reiterated AHA’s support for SB234, the bill discussed by Jessica Eskeland.

Ms. Carroll said that AHA was opposed to shortening the duration of unemployment benefits (HB190), saying that she understood that the system experienced very little abuse and that for older adults it can be difficult to enter back into the workforce quickly because of issues of seniority and caregiving.

AHA also opposes HB496, described earlier by Brendan Williams, and requiring that nursing facility residents be supervised by representatives of the two major political parties when they fill out their absentee ballot. Ms. Carroll reiterated, “the nursing home is their home.”

- C. Jessica Eskeland** said that the Alzheimer’s Association also supports SB36, including its focuses on presumptive eligibility for CFI clients, bringing rates up to alignment with the “market basket,” and strengthening the ServiceLink network.

She said that the Association would be closely following SFY24-25 budget discussions. It supports HB86, the workforce bill. She said that the Association is concerned that a House Health and Human Services oversight committee to focus on issues around dementia has been dormant.

- D. Brendan Williams** reiterated that the Association’s overriding issue is the workforce challenge and said that his members feel that they are at the mercy of out-of-state staffing agencies, with such severe workforce shortfalls in-state. A positive result of the workforce challenges is that the different segments of the long-term care and healthcare systems are recognizing their interdependence and working to craft potential solutions. He added that the Association supports the continuation of Medicaid expansion in the state.

- E. **Gina Balkus** said that the Alliance is focused on the state budget for SFY24-25 and the rates established for all levels of home care workers. She said that if rates were in alignment with the “market basket” standard, the system would have grown by \$153 million from 2011-2021. At this point, rates have fallen way behind the standard, especially for those paid through the Medicaid long-term care system.

Ms. Balkus said that American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds for CFI made a difference to staff retention and the ability to have staff work longer hours. Once the funding stopped, there was a drop off. She noted that those approved for Medicaid private duty nursing are on average just receiving 47 percent of the hours they need.

She pointed out that rates paid to Medicaid providers are significantly lower than rates paid for similar programs through Title IIIB (Older Americans Act) and Title XX (Social Services Block Grant). To bring Medicaid long-term care rates up to par with these other programs would cost \$15 million over current budget (\$7.5 million would be paid with federal dollars and \$7.5 million with state/local dollars). If systemic changes were made to increase the availability of CFI services, the cost would increase by \$18.6 million by 2025 (half federal, half state/local). She noted that the DHHS budget requests a three percent increase in Medicaid rates, which she said was not enough to stabilize the program. Mr. Williams concurred.

Questions and comments from Commission members and the public followed.

- Rep. MacKay said that the House Health and Human Services oversight committee could form subcommittees to look into specific issues. He added, “We are breaking the law every day with prolonged hospital stays for those who need other types of care.”
- Rep. Weber said that she agreed with Jim and spoke about the Health and Human Services Committee, on which she serves. She said she has great hope that the Committee members will work together productively.
- Rev. Nolan said that she is in favor of absentee voting supervision within nursing facilities. In response, Mr. Williams said that capacity has never been a standard for voting privately and without supervision. Rep. Weber added that town clerks have a role to play and that the bill lays out much more onerous requirements for nursing facility residents to vote absentee.
- Carol Stamatakis expressed her appreciation for the presentations and the statistics Ms. Balkus presented. She said that it would be critical to get out the statistics and the stories. Chair Ruka asked Ms. Balkus to share the detailed statistics with the Commission.
- Dan Marcek asked Ms. Eskeland for more detail on the projected growth of the population with dementia in New Hampshire. How does the growth here compare to national growth? Is the population with dementia evenly spread across the state? Wendi Aultman noted that data seem to be driven by diagnoses and physician access. Where there are more care providers reporting data, it can appear that the numbers are higher. Doug McNutt said that the population with dementia increases with higher aged populations.
- Rep. MacKay thanked former DHHS Commissioner Lori Shibinette for her service and noted that her retirement from the position was a great loss to the state.

III. **COA Policy Team: Overview of Tracked Bills (Polly Champion)**

Polly Champion presented the Commission’s policy group Legislative report. The group meets every Friday at 1 p.m. during the Legislative Session to review bills and their status.

A hand-out of tracked bills was distributed with the meeting materials and was available as a hand-out at the meeting. Ms. Campion explained that the bills were reviewed and categorized in alignment with Commission priorities, as outlined in the 2022 Annual Report (e.g., System of Care, Workforce). She said that the group was looking for someone to help with the housing-related bills. Lynn Lippitt said that she would be happy to provide a list of bills and the positions taken by the NH Housing Finance Authority.

Ms. Campion went through the list of bills, speaking briefly about System of Care-related bills SB36 and SB 127; Workforce-related bills HB655, HB594, and SB86; bills concerned with Prescription Drugs and Telehealth, Civic Engagement, Housing, and Other.

Ms. Stamatakis asked that if there are bills missing from the list, please let the Commission know about them. Rebecca Sky referred Commission members to guidance documents for speaking out regarding legislation. Rep. Weber said that it can be very effective for individuals to testify both personally and also on behalf of an organization, saying explicitly when their testimony is personal or for a group.

Ms. Campion said that in addition to the Legislative work, a group from the Commission (Chair Ruka, Executive Director Sky, Mr. McNutt) had met with staff in the Governor's Office to raise issues of concern to the Commission. Chair Ruka met with new member, Sen. Gannon, as well.

IV. Older Adult Volunteer Awards

Beth Quarm Todgham has volunteered to work on the annual awards program. She said that nominations are beginning to come in and asked Commission members and the public to continue to reach out to encourage nominations from each county. The deadline is early March, and the volunteer awards celebration will take place in May.

V. State Plan on Aging—Survey Outreach

Wendi Aultman provided an update regarding in-person and virtual listening sessions to garner information for the State Plan on Aging. Additional virtual sessions for special populations will take place in the weeks to come. The Plan will include summaries of information, trends, input from the listening sessions, and survey results. Approximately 600 surveys have been submitted thus far to the Bureau of Elderly and Adult Services. Ms. Aultman said outreach continues to be welcome. Tracy McGraw asked that the link to the survey be sent out again.

VI. Public Input

Shelley Winters reported that at the meeting of the State Coordinating Council for Community Transportation held last Friday, the group recommended to the Governor's Office that ARPA funds be used to do a needs assessment of transportation for older adults. The Commission had sent a letter to the Department of Transportation with that recommendation last summer. Mr. Marcek asked what the process would be at this point. Ms. Winters said that she anticipated a response after the Governor's Budget is released. Ms. Aultman asked how much the needs assessment was projected to cost. Members of the Commission recalled that it was estimated to be approximately \$350,000.

Richard Lavers said that the Governor's Office for Emergency Relief and Recovery (GOFERR) had approved additional funding for Employment Security to provide support for licensed Emergency Management Technicians (EMTs) to receive new training and retention bonuses. The funding will also help support Emergency Management Services units to provide both emergency and non-emergency transfers of patients.

VII. Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 11:55 a.m.



Meals on Wheels New Hampshire

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Dear Rebecca & Members of NHCOA,

We appreciate the support and interest NHCOA has shown in the mission of Meals on Wheels and it’s impact on New Hampshire residents. To further expand upon your knowledge of our programs we wanted to share some collective data from our member agencies.

Last year collectively our agencies provided 1.8 million meals to 15,852 individuals across the state. In addition, several members of the group helped 1,745 people stay mobile in their community by providing over 38,000 rides.

Agency	Service Area -County	Meals Served	Dining Clientele	Rides	Transportation Clients
BMCAP	<i>Belknap & Merrimack</i>	260,116	2,564	9,902	523
GCSS	<i>Carroll</i>	38,043	723	1,713	90
GCSCC	<i>Grafton</i>	185,273	2,480	8,143	519
HCMOW	<i>Hillsborough</i>	361,011	2,138	1,696	76
HHHCS	<i>Cheshire</i>	122,671	767	2,444	167
OCC	<i>Carroll</i>	88,878	872		
RNMOW	<i>Rockingham</i>	342,384	3,301	13,429	310
SNMOW	<i>Strafford</i>	124,688	1,458		
SCN	<i>Sullivan</i>	128,063	661	1,282	60
TCCAP	<i>Coos & Carroll</i>	143,415	888		

Based on our historical service data and the NH census data projections we are anticipating a 32% increase in needs for our services over the next 8 years. From 2030 to 2040 we expect a much more modest increase of about 3% and little to no growth in need from 2040 to 2050.

Demand for service is only one critical factor of the equation as we look to the future. This past year these programs have seen an increase in their expenses as high as 16%. The economic projection for next year is another 8.9% increase. Increase costs along with growth makes things unsustainable at current funding levels.

Collective data from our Fall 2022 surveys:

- 61% of our participants say Meals on Wheels provides their primary source of nutrition.
- 44% of our participants say they would not be able to afford food.
- 88% of our participants say MOW benefit their health.
- 83% of our participants say MOW is vital in their ability to remain in their homes.
- 41% of our participants say the MOW driver is the only person they see all week.

We are working on gathering some detail ADL & IADL data, but as part of state requirements every homebound participant must have at least 1 ADL or IADL challenge to meet eligibility requirements. On average most of participants have at least 3 ADL/IADL issues.

Community Action Program Belknap-Merrimack Counties, Inc. | Gibson Center for Senior Services |
 Grafton County Senior Citizen’s Council | Hillsborough County Meals on Wheels |
 Home Healthcare, Hospice and Community Services | Ossipee Concerned Citizens |
 Rockingham Nutrition & Meals on Wheels Program | Strafford Nutrition & Meals on Wheels |
 Sullivan County Nutrition | Tri-County Community Action Program, Inc.